IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A system, comprising a network node configured to negotiate for connections for high priority calls received at the node in the face of otherwise congested outbound communication links, wherein the node is configured to negotiate for one or more voice channels to accommodate the high priority calls depending upon selected compression schemes for existing calls transported on the outbound communication links.

2. (Original) A system as in claim 1, wherein the negotiation is conducted in a fashion that will preserve connections for existing calls associated with the node.

3. (Original) A system as in claim 2, wherein the negotiation is conducted so as to cause one or more of the existing calls to consume less bandwidth over the outbound communication links than was consumed at a time prior to reception of the high priority calls.

4. (Original) A system as in claim 3, wherein the node is configured to initiate the negotiation depending on the availability of codec resources at the node.

5. (Original) A system as in claim 1, wherein the high priority calls comprise voice calls.

6. (Original) A system as in claim 1, wherein the node is configured to commence negotiations according to availability of codec resources at the node.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) A method comprising managing a communication link between nodes of a communication network so as to ensure connection availability for one or more high priority calls over the communication link through dynamic renegotiations of call parameters for existing calls transported over the communication link, wherein the dynamic renegotiations comprise negotiations of compression schemes for the calls, wherein the dynamic renegotiations are accomplished through the exchange of OAM cells between the nodes.

9. (Original) A method as in claim 8, wherein the calls are voice calls.

10. (Original) A method as in claim 9, wherein the communication link supports communications according to the Asynchronous Transfer Mode.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 8, wherein the dynamic renegotiations are supported according to codec availability at the nodes.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Original) A method as in claim 12, wherein codec availability is determined according to profile information maintained by the nodes.

15. (Original) A method as in claim 12, wherein the high priority calls are determined as such according to database information regarding called numbers.

16. (Previously Presented) A network comprising:

a number of nodes connected through one or more communication links; and

a resource manager configured to allocate bandwidth over the communication links to high priority calls received at one or more of the nodes without dropping existing calls within the network through dynamic renegotiations of existing bandwidth utilization within the network, wherein the nodes each support multiple codec resources to compress voice information transmitted over the communication links, wherein the dynamic renegotiations comprise negotiations of compression schemes supported by the multiple codec resources for the calls.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 16 wherein the resource manager is a distributed resource among the nodes of the network.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 16 wherein the dynamic renegotiations are supported through the exchange of OAM cells between the nodes.

21. (Previously Presented) A system, comprising:

means for negotiating compression schemes for one or more high priority voice calls; and

means for managing a communication link between nodes of a communication network so as to ensure connection availability for the one or more high priority voice calls over the communication link through the means for negotiating compression schemes.

22. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21 wherein the means for negotiating further comprises means for exchange of OAM cells between the nodes.

23. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium containing executable instructions which, when executed in a controller system, cause the system to perform the following comprising managing a communication link between nodes of a communication network so as to ensure connection availability for one or more high priority calls over the communication link through dynamic renegotiations of call parameters for existing calls transported over the communication link, wherein the dynamic renegotiations comprise negotiations of compression schemes for the voice calls.

24. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 23, wherein the dynamic renegotiations are supported according to codec availability at the nodes.

25. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 23, wherein the dynamic renegotiations are accomplished through the exchange of OAM cells between the nodes.